



# The HHSA Connection

THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

JUNE 2007

## Plan. Prepare. Protect.



**FLU: Pandemic/Bird**  
Plan. Prepare. Protect.  
County of San Diego

The Agency, along with the County of San Diego, business, school and community partners, launched a public education campaign at the end of May designed to encourage planning ahead for the possibility of a pandemic flu.

The Pandemic Flu Education Campaign launched May 23 at the County Administration Center with the slogan "Plan. Prepare. Protect." You will be seeing that message throughout San Diego County, in a series of television and radio public service announcements, in advertisements on buses, in the San Diego Airport, on billboards and in movie theaters ads.

"History shows us a pandemic flu could happen again," said County Board of Supervisors Chairman **Ron Roberts**, who with the rest of the Board of Supervisors has spearheaded preparation efforts. During the kick-off,



County Board of Supervisors Chair **Ron Roberts** helps kick off the Agency's Pandemic Flu Education Campaign.



County Public Health Officer **Wilma Wooten**, M.D., M.P.H. speaks to a local tv station at the campaign kickoff.

Roberts was joined by **Paula Landau-Cox**, Director of Operations, HHSA, **Wilma Wooten**, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer; **Nikos Gurfield**, D.V.M., County Veterinarian; Carey Storm of Qualcomm; and Wayne Sakamoto, Lead Coordinator, Safe Schools Program, San Diego County Office of Education.

"We're bringing together all elements of the community to provide support and help San Diego County be ready for this kind of health emergency," added Roberts.

The campaign includes resource tool kits for businesses, schools, and the public to help them in their preparations. The campaign also includes a soon-to-be-instituted Ambassador program, which trains individuals to teach others about planning for a pandemic flu and measures to take to protect against the spread of respiratory illness.

"'Plan. Prepare. Protect.' are good watchwords year round, whether or not there is a pandemic flu," said Dr. Wooten. "For example, we urge the public to cover their cough and stay home when they are sick to help prevent the spread of seasonal flu, among other things."

The Pandemic Flu Education Campaign is one of several efforts by the County to prepare for a possible pandemic flu, which could happen if the avian (bird) flu became easily transmissible from human to human. There are currently no cases of avian flu in the United States and there is no pandemic flu worldwide.

For more information on pandemic flu, go to the [County of San Diego Pandemic Flu website](#).

## A Message from Jean M. Shepard

*Health and Human Services Agency  
Director*

As you've probably heard by now, I have appointed **Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.**, as the new County Public Health Officer. I'm very excited to have Dr. Wooten heading up our Office of Public Health.



Dr. Wooten brings an exciting vision to Public Health in our County, building on the many excellent programs we have today. She plans to enhance cross threading activities between Public Health Services, the regions and other Agency divisions, maximizing services available to the public.

We'll continue to focus on outcomes, and finding ways to improve even more on the success we've achieved to date. Dr. Wooten will work to enhance the strong community partnerships that she has fostered during her years as Deputy Public Health Officer.

Dr. Wooten's strength in leadership, dedication to community service, and passion for public health are assets that will serve the Agency well as it moves forward in the changing world of healthcare.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Wooten to her new position.

*Jean M. Shepard*

## Edgemoor Names LN, CNA of the Year

Edgemoor announced their Licensed Nurse and Certified Nursing Assistant of the Year at an appreciation event held on May 23rd. They also recognized all the runners-up.

**Grace Ezekafor** was named the Licensed Nurse of the Year while **Terri Blankartz** was honored as the Certified Nursing Assistant of the Year.

Ezekafor has been working with the County at Edgemoor for over 16 years and began her career as a Nursing Assistant and then received her license to be a Licensed Vocational nurse. She credits her mother as an inspiration in her decision to pursue a career in healthcare and she continues to be inspired daily by interactions with the residents she cares for.

Blankartz has been working with Edgemoor as a Nursing Assistant for 14 years. Prior to working at Edgemoor, she decided that she wanted to pursue a career in the healthcare field after working with children. The residents that she works with at Edgemoor and the events in their lives inspire her to come to work every day and do the best job she can.



**Terri Blankartz**, left, was honored as Edgemoor's Certified Nursing Assistant of the Year while **Grace Ezekafor**, right, was named the Licensed Nurse of the Year at an event on May 23rd.

## East Region: Toddlers Share Success With Nurse Family Partnership Graduation

This is graduation season, a time of excitement for graduates, family, and friends of all ages. On May 2, 17 energetic two-year-old toddlers graduated from the Nurse Family Partnership Program (NFP) in East Region.

Chelsie and Justice were two of those attendants at the ceremony. Justice is two years old and was one of the NFP graduates. Chelsie, her mom, was beaming as only a mother could witnessing her little girl's accomplishment. Chelsie also had another graduation scheduled one week later when she would graduate from SDSU with a Bachelors' Degree in Criminal Justice.

Chelsie persevered in finishing school through her pregnancy. She returned to school a few days after delivery because this was something she needed to do for herself and her child, according to Chelsie.



Chelsie, right, and two-year-old daughter Justice celebrated their graduation from the East Region's Nurse Family Partnership program.

With education, support and guidance, Chelsie learned while in NFP that she can accomplish anything in life and plans to return to school for a law degree. Celebrating both these graduation milestones is a major component of what is taught to NFP families.

NFP is an evidence-based prevention program that

improves the health and well-being of low-income, first-time mothers and their children. Public Health Nurses provide home visits from pregnancy to the child's second birthday.



Ten of the Nurse Family Partnership program graduates all dressed up for their big day.

These parents learn how to take care of both themselves and their children. Educational topics include prenatal care, labor and delivery, baby care, safety, nutrition, immunizations, domestic violence, and substance abuse. These mothers learn life skills to assist them in developing healthy relationships, understanding the value of education for both themselves and their babies, and the practical aspects of running a household.

Research has confirmed that for every dollar invested in NFP, four dollars are saved across a number of public sector systems, including health care, child protection, education, criminal justice, mental health and public assistance. This past year, HHSA/East Region met or exceeded other California and/or National NFP sites in six out of seven measures.

Graduation is a very important event for both families and NFP staff. The ceremony includes common graduation elements: speeches, diplomas, small gifts, and a reception. Acknowledgment of this achievement is critical in order to instill the realization that they are able to accomplish anything in their life.

## Emergency Survival Program

There are many resources available to help you. For example, the [County's Office of Emergency Services](#) offers an Emergency Survival Program (ESP) with monthly tips to increase emergency preparedness at home, in the community, at work and at school.



The June theme is "Hazardous Materials." [The County's emergency page](#) will provide information in the event of a disaster.



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# South Region hosts Youth Empowerment Summit

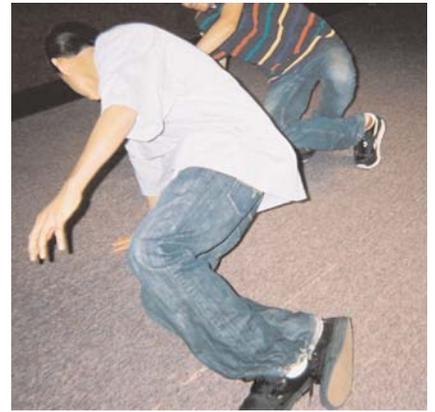
More than 160 local teenagers participated in the very successful "Youth Empowerment Summit" on Saturday, April 28th in National City. The event targeted youth in foster and kinship care, but was open to all teens. The focus was on teaching them important life and independent living skills.

The day began on an energetic note with impressive performances by the "Cornerstone Dance Team" and the "THC Breakers." Guest speaker Sergio De La Mora encouraged youth to overcome the "labels" that have been placed on them to develop to their full potential.

Participants enjoyed interactive and informative workshops on a variety of subjects, including career readiness, leadership, art, and breakdancing. The afternoon featured entertainment by Eveoke Dance Theater and motivational keynote speaker Rita Naranjo. Naranjo, a former foster youth, gave an inspiring multi-media presentation entitled: "Life After Foster Care: Survival and Success Through Higher Education."

"The Youth Empowerment Summit helps foster children and others feel comfortable with themselves," said one appreciative participant. "It also gives teenagers a glimpse of life."

The Youth Empowerment Summit was organized in partnership with HHSA South Region, Casey Family Programs, South Bay Community Services, Cornerstone Church of San Diego and the Turning the Hearts Center. Several local businesses also helped make the event a success.



Several teens took part in breakdancing as part of the Youth Empowerment Summit's activities.

## KUDOS ♦ KUDOS ♦ KUDOS ♦ KUDOS

### Chrissie Burness, Adoptions Social Worker

From Diem and Mary Nguyen: "We just wanted to write and thank your Agency for being so motivated to bring our boys home. It was a joy to work with San Diego County, particularly **Chrissie Burness**.

From the very beginning, our process was smooth and well-explained. Chrissie was helpful, supportive and really worked hard toward our finalization. It was clear that she cares deeply for the children she places. We were just so pleased with every aspect of our experience with your Agency. Thank you very much for your part in completing our family!"

### Polinsky and Foster Youth Mentor Volunteers

Over 70 Polinsky Children's Center and Foster Youth Mentor volunteers were honored for their contributions at a breakfast held at the Bahia Resort Hotel. The event, annually sponsored by the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation, was organized by the PCC Volunteer Program.

### Nick Macchione, Agency Deputy Director

was recently elected to Delta Omega in the Honorary Membership Category by the members of the society at the Sigma chapter, San Diego State University, Graduate School of Public Health.

Honorary membership is conferred only upon people possessing exceptional qualifications and who have attained meritorious local, national or international distinction in the field of public health.

**Compliance Office:**

**(619) 515-4244**

**Toll-Free Compliance Hotline:**

**(866) 549-0004**

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## North Regions Educate Public, Staff at Events

North Central Public Health Center staff hosted a community health fair in Pacific Beach to celebrate Cinco de Mayo (May 5th). The health fair supported North Region's Healthy Communities and Lifestyles Initiatives on childhood obesity prevention and access to care.

The clinic nurses provided tuberculosis testing and immunizations to children. Various vendors and community agencies actively participated, including Public Health Nursing, Domestic Violence Links, Legal Aid Society, Beach Area Family Health Clinic, WIC, Social Advocates for Youth San Diego, American Red Cross, San Diego Fire Department, local businesses and representatives from Bayview Terrace Elementary School.

Other activities included dancing, face-painting, a hula-hoop contest, a chance to win prizes, and much more.

Approximately 100 family members attended and enjoyed the fun-filled festivity.

On April 28, the Agency took part in the 22nd Annual Linda Vista Multi-cultural Fair, which was hosted by the Linda Vista Collaborative and partnering agencies to promote cultural awareness and understanding. Attendees enjoyed the Fair's numerous cultural exhibits, varied ethnic food offerings, and delightful artistic performances.



North Regions Public Health Nurses **Kay Scavulli**, **Debbie Pasamonte**, **Linda Lake**, and **Quynh Gredig** were on hand at the Linda Vista Multi-cultural Fair to showcase the services of the Agency.

County Supervisor Chairman **Ron Roberts** led the start of the parade, which featured many marching bands. Over 100 organizations hosted booths, while performances on three stages brought cultural, diverse, and contemporary music to all who attended.

Supervising Public Health Nurse (PHN) **Debbie Pasamonte**, HealthLink PHN **Sue Coffman**, Epidemiology/Bioterrorism PHN **Kay Scavulli**, PHN **Quynh Gredig**, and Protective Service Worker **An Tran** participated in this day-long event to represent the services of the Agency and distribute information on available community resources.



North Central Public Health Nurses staff information booths at the Cinco de Mayo Health and Access to Care Fair held in Pacific Beach on May 5th.

### Director's Call-In

Share your ideas and concerns with  
**HHSA Director**      **Director of Operations**  
**Jean M. Shepard**      **Paula Landau-Cox**

First Friday of each month • 8 a.m. - noon  
 (619) 515-6555

### Search the HHSA Web Site by Key Words

This is a handy link to send out to people who are not yet familiar with our site.

To send a link, just copy the URL from the address bar of an Internet page and paste it into an e-mail.

# CCS Event Promotes Understanding

On May 1st, administrators, teachers, and support personnel at Greg Rogers Elementary School in Chula Vista spent the day performing their regular duties while restricted to a wheelchair. It was all part of an event put on by the California Children Services' (CCS) Chula Vista Medical Therapy Unit to raise awareness of the struggles disabled children and adults face and to provide insight on how members of a community can assist and support them.

Physical and occupational therapists provided instruction in community adaptations to assist with completion of daily tasks, taught staff about routine wheelchair maintenance, and provided fun wheelchair activities for the children and adults to participate in together. Several classes participated in a cooking class.

A highlight of the event was when the entire school cheered on therapists, students, and school staff during a wheelchair race. Older wheelchair-bound CCS clients from South Bay, National City, Sweetwater and Coronado school districts were also on hand to serve as mentors and participate in the race.

An athlete from Adaptive Sports Foundation glided through the course with ease, inspiring those in attendance. When asked if it was hard or easy being in a wheelchair, CCS client Israel Davis noted, "It's easy, you just have to push yourself and push yourself and never give up!"

At the end of the race, Principal Tim Glover noted how much he has enjoyed working with CCS and what a great collaborative relationship they have.



*CCS staff put gloves on students before cutting up fruit so that they can experience functioning with hemiplegia (one side of the body weaker or not working as well as the other side, as in a stroke).*



*The Agency's California Children Services Chula Vista Medical Therapy Unit Therapists*

## Long Term Care Integration Physician Strategy Initiative Receives New Grant Monies

The California Endowment and the Alliance Healthcare Foundation has approved funding of over half a million dollars to implement the Agency's Long Term Care Integration Physician Strategy initiative. Previously the California Endowment had awarded the Agency a planning grant to look at how we could better integrate social services with doctor's offices to improve coordination of services for seniors. We have been working with the San Diego Medical Association and many physicians in planning and can now move forward with implementation.

A key component will be the improved Network of Care website which includes the new Long Term Care Counselor option which was demonstrated at the CAO quarterly. These improvements were funded through a \$610,000 grant from the Administration on Aging and was highlighted as one of the 2007 Choices of Independence Program Champions by the U.S. Administration on Aging. Congratulations to **Evalyn Greb** and her team.

## A Note of Gratitude



HHSA's **René Santiago** recognizes the more than 400 volunteers that helped residents throughout San Diego County file nearly 30,000 state and federal income tax returns during the 2007 Earned Income Tax Credit campaign.

A total of 26,776 hours were donated countywide. More than \$15 million was returned to San Diego County residents in 2007 from state and federal income tax returns. Of the total, \$5.6 million were EITC dollars.

## Employee Discount Program

As a County employee, you can receive exciting new discounts for theme parks, movie theaters and services for you and your family members. The County is pleased to announce that we have added some new features to our Employee Discount Program.

You are able to access club discount cards and coupons as well as place orders for discount tickets on-line. The following theme parks and services have been added: Boomers, Disneyland, Medieval Times, movie theaters and See's Candies.

Another feature is our Current Discounted Events which lists a variety of shows and events. Enjoy the fun by bringing your family and friends. You can take advantage of these great employee discounts by visiting our [employee discount webpage](#).

More fun and exciting events will be posted soon. Look for special discounts to 2007 San Diego Padres games!

## Mental Health Month



May was Mental Health Month and HHSA's Mental Health Services sponsored and participated in a number of events celebrating the month. **Dr. Jennifer Schaffer**, Deputy Director for Behavioral Health Division is joined by other HHSA and state mental health officials at a news conference highlighting the success of new programs established with Mental Health Services Act funds.



Mental Health Services officials, community leaders, service providers, and mental health consumers lay down 84,000 pennies stretching a mile long in an effort to highlight the stigma of mental illness.

The event kicked off "National Mental Health Month," established more than 50 years ago to raise awareness about mental illnesses and the importance of mental wellness for all and to encourage people to seek the help they need.

The penny is a reference to President Abraham Lincoln, who lived with a mental illness but was able to lead a productive life. Help is available by calling the County's Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.

## National Foster Care Month/Child Abuse Prevention Month

Children and foster families were honored at the San Diego Commission on Children, Youth and Families (CCYF) annual conference and a Child Welfare Services Foster Parent Recognition Banquet.

The CCYF handed out STARS awards at the annual conference to ten individuals. Among the honorees were three Agency employees: **Lynnette Miller**, North Central Children's Services, **Francesca Ruble**, North Inland Children's Services, and **Judy Quinn**, Public Health Nurse Supervisor. The awards were given during Child Abuse Prevention Month to individuals whose extraordinary efforts championed this cause.

Additionally, foster parents were honored at the Centralized Child Welfare Services' Foster Parent Recognition Banquet on May 11th. Karen and James O'Hare, from the East Region were honored as Foster Parents of the Year.

Other foster parents recognized in each region were:

South: Maria Del Rio

North Central: Michele Kassa

North Coastal: Mirtha Valadez and Frank Bumpus

North Inland: Misty and Phillip Gunn

Central: Jacqueline Lacy

### North Regions Annual Family Appreciation Picnic

On May 12th, North Regions hosted the 8th Annual North County Cares Foster and Kinship Family Appreciation Picnic. More than 600 people attended this free event that featured a barbeque picnic, live entertainment, activities for children of all ages, a health resource fair, and an awards ceremony honoring outstanding North County foster and kinship families. Other partners sponsoring the picnic included Green Oak Ranch, New Alternatives, Inc., the California Endowment, Straight from the Heart, North County Lifeline, and Connected Through Kids.

It was the hard work of a group of HHSA staff worked together to make the 8th annual picnic a success. Everyone on the team had a desire to thank and honor the foster caregivers, their families and all foster children. Also instrumental was Green Oak Ranch Facilities Manager Ray McCann, and foster mom and 10News Leadership Award winner Barbie Caldwell.



Starfish Award winner **Lorrie York**, second from left, is a Family Nurse Practitioner with Palomar-Pomerado Health District who provides medical assessments to children at CANN. With her is **Caroline Smith**, District 5, left; foster mom **Barbie Caldwell**, second from right; and HHSA Deputy Director **Nick Macchione**.



HHSA Public Health Nurses **Sue Coffman** (North Central Region), **Lupe Flores** (North Coastal Region) and **Dottie Gillon** (North Inland Region) hosted a resource booth that featured games focused on nutrition and physical activity.



Numerous resource booths provided children and families with activities, refreshments and important information on health and wellness issues.

## Tutor Connection Receives 2007 Change a Lifetime Award

Coordinator Michelle Lustig was honored in Sacramento May 1st for the Tutor Connection program she helped create, which provides foster youth with tutors from the College of Education at Cal State University, San Marcos.

San Diego County has nearly 6,000 children in the dependency system, with approximately 250 emancipating to adulthood each year. Educational outcomes for foster youth have traditionally been dismal. Nationally, only 51% of foster youth graduate from high school, 26-40% repeat one or more grades, and 31% are below grade level in math or reading. Improving academic skills and outcomes for foster youth has become a priority for all individuals involved in the lives of these youth.

The Tutor Connection Program represents the culmination of a dynamic collaboration between the Agency, Child Welfare Services, San Diego County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services, California State University, San Marcos, College of Education (CSUSM) and Casey Family Programs. Students in foster care between ages 5-21 receive free tutoring. The tutors are future teachers, enrolled in CSUSM's College of Education.

The dual goals of this program are first, to insure that all foster youth have the educational support they need to succeed in school and second, to educate future teachers on the unique needs of youth in foster care. Achievement of these goals is expected to produce a systemic change that will positively impact future generations of foster youth.

To date over 1100 future teachers have participated in this program and over 1500 foster youth have received tutoring services.

### Send in kudos!

Proud of a coworker? Send text (and photos): [thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov) - or contact your section editor.

## Spring Fling Hopes to Make More Matches

San Diego County Adoptions held the 6th Annual "Spring Fling Picnic" on April 28. This event turns the dream of a family into reality for some children and prospective parents.

Sixty-three children attended the picnic accompanied by their social workers. More than 150 adoptive applicants with approved home studies were present. Adoptive applicant families and children interacted in an atmosphere that was positive, comfortable and fun for the children.

Children enjoyed a puppet show, carnival games, sports activities, artistic outlets, popcorn and a cook-out. The Padres' Friar was on hand making everyone laugh, having pictures taken with the children and talking up this year's baseball season.

There are approximately 150 foster children waiting for an adoptive family in San Diego County. San Diego County Adoptions is continually working to ensure that foster children have a family to call their own.

Last year's "Spring Fling Picnic" resulted in 28 children finding a permanent and loving adoptive family.



*The San Diego Padres' Friar made an appearance at the Spring Fling Picnic to talk baseball and pose for photos with the children.*